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Foreword

Eureka! Discovering Gold in a Leaden World

A group of diplomats from many parts of the world gathered near Dublin, Ireland in a workshop to problem-solve about one of the most intractable conflicts of our time: Israel/Palestine. They were no strangers to conflict. The challenge for us as facilitators was to move them out of the well-worn channels of reflexive statements, carefully devised political framings and limiting assumptions. For two days, nothing out of the ordinary happened.

Then we took a bus trip to Belfast where we looked down Falls and Shankill Roads, searching in a "pre-Good-Friday-agreement Northern Ireland" for ways to address intractable differences. Jostled in the bus, the previously restrained participants became multi-dimensional and a little more "juicy" to each other. They uncovered commonalities, shared passions, and began to play. As the bus headed back to Dublin following a group meal, people sang together under the comforting cover of darkness. Only after this excursion did conversations enliven, originality emerge and creative possibilities for shifting the difficult dynamics in Israel/Palestine begin to reveal themselves.

As I have spoken of this experience to colleagues over the years, it has generated questions: Should all problem-solving workshops include a field trip, preferably on a rough road? How can participation in conflict-transformation processes be structured or unstructured to invite creativity and innovation? What helps people step out of habitual perceptions and narrow understandings, allowing nuance and texture to enter into monolithic stories and linear analyses? How can we inspire people to do something other than traverse well-worn tracks of analysis and problem-solving when doing anything else seems risky or "different"?

Answers to these questions rest on obvious, hidden-in-plain-sight truisms. Everyone at this workshop had powerful gifts in common: they were in real-life bodies with creative capabilities and a love of play and

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beauty. Why state these obvious facts? Because that workshop – like dozens of others I have attended – was designed as if everyone existed from the neck up. As if brilliant analysis would flow directly from careful selection among a range of cognitive alternatives. As if those facilitating had only to nudge people to "think creatively, outside the box" and new spirals of fecund possibility would unfurl themselves, unfettered by previous inhibitions, perceptual habits or norms of doing business.

Just as the jostling bus ride and the stark reality of Falls Road interrupted the diplomats' patterns of behavior to yield creative openings, so have the visionary scholar/practitioners in this book revealed ways to transform conflict and catalyze social change outside customary practices. The world cries out for embodied, artful experience to invoke the pan-human capacity for creativity, even – or especially – in the midst of ashes. This book provides a window into how this can be done by leaders in the expressive arts field. From a firm theoretical foundation, the book offers insights grounded in case examples and is unafraid to pose questions. This is no rose-tinted window. It is as clear and unrelenting a piece of work as I have read in a long time. Stephen and Ellen Levine and their colleagues have done what many conflict resolvers and peaceworkers long to do: they offer ways to transform conflict, acknowledging its complexity while trusting mystery.

Reading this book was a "eureka" experience. It brings together inherited wisdom with the most compelling thinking I have encountered in a decade, addressing questions we in the conflict-transformation and peacemaking fields have been asking for at least as long. Not only does it address them, it does so with theory grounded in phenomenology, principles illustrated in practice, and possibility channeled into results. It does so in a spirit of partnership and deep respect for those with whom the authors engage, a spirit vital to the success of conflict transformation.

Ellen and Stephen Levine – with their contributing authors – have created a book that I hope every mediator, peacemaker, negotiator and social change practitioner will read. Why? Because their work in expressive arts – developed over the past 25 years – is a missing link in the field of conflict resolution and peacemaking. It not only introduces new and vitally important ways of thinking about conflict and its resolution, it provides clear examples of how these ideas actually work. Practitioners applying them may well find their work – and the results of this work – transformed.

M.C. Richards – a famous potter and artist – writes this about the complexity of imagining ways through conflict:

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> *Can we imagine a kind of peace that includes the freedom to conflict, a kind of warmth that allows the freedom to withdraw, a kind of union that asks for free and unique individualities, a kind of good that grants the mystery of evil, a kind of life that bears death within it like a seed-force? (Richards 1998, p.234)*

Art in Action addresses Richards' questions as well as many others from the conflict transformation/peacemaking fields. It is a carefully constructed collection of jewels that reveal how a visionary group of thought-leaders and practitioners discovered ways of addressing the following challenges in attempts to resolve conflict:

- Focusing on the issues in conflict often escalates disagreement, worsens relationships and deepens the conflict itself.
- Problem-solving and analysis are limited by parties' and interveners' perceptions and perceptual habits, assumptions and cognitive frames.
- Creativity is advised in addressing conflict, yet people in conflict tend toward narrowed perceptions, evaluating possibilities critically and negatively (even when they are asked not to), thus experiencing limited room for maneuvering.
- Durable solutions to intractable conflicts are elusive because the conflicts themselves change, and mysteries not amenable to logical problem-solving continue to emerge.

Given these challenges, how to proceed? This preface traces the genius of *Art in Action* in answering that question.

In the first chapter, Stephen K. Levine outlines the history of the field of expressive arts, identifying key ideas including intermodality. Intermodality – Knill's idea that arts practices engage different sensory capacities – helps us understand and conceptualize the body as a multi-faceted perceptual, expressive and relational center. The creative capacity of the body as a vehicle where words and art come together is what Levine calls *poiesis*. He identifies humans' abilities to shape and be shaped by diverse worlds as *world-building* and *self-building*. The creative possibilities that arise from an aesthetic response to a situation or an issue generate change not only at the level of imagination but in lived, measurable reality.

By outlining an approach to conflict based in *poiesis*, Levine provides practical hope. He reminds us that it is precisely because we are capable

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of imagining our world in multiple ways that we feel hopeless when we are blocked from doing so. The work of the change agent in expressive arts, then, is to work with people to restore their capacity for *poiesis*. How is this done? The answer is both structured and emergent, bounded and open-ended. It involves a range of practices that magnify creativity, while steering carefully away from the more linear containment that too often characterizes conflict-transformation work. Levine shows us how art-making restores individuals' and groups' capacities for action and agency, giving up control in order to achieve mastery, as Paolo Knill has counseled. In short, Stephen Levine inspires while handing us tools to till ground we had feared barren.

Ellen Levine deepens the fertility of the book, relating her experiences in social activism and restorative work that led her to the vitality of expressive arts. Her memoir traces well-intentioned participation in social justice work that, in retrospect, excluded important parties. She powerfully relates an experience of visiting Israel during her teens in which she met the heroes of one side but not the other. Her dedication to being of service led her ultimately to "the community-oriented playfulness and joyousness of [expressive arts] work," attracted by its "emancipatory spirit of collective and collaborative art-making." This attraction shook the foundations of her clinical work, and caused her to step away from reductionist, deficit-oriented approaches. Levine's moving story traces how her work in visual art and clown performance changed the way she saw herself, yielding not only a new identity but also pointing to expressive arts as ways to expand possibilities in the world.

A leader in expressive arts and social change work, Ellen has partnered with Palestinians and Israelis to explore possibilities for shifting intractable relations and patterns. In doing so, she illustrates a full-circle journey from her early travels, partnering with others to create worlds whose peace includes the freedom to conflict and whose unity honors uniqueness.

One of the foundational ideas in this book is that our systems for analyzing and categorizing issues and problems are often too limited to yield effective results in a complex world. Karen Estrella situates the arts as transformative by nature and therefore amenable to holding multiple discourses and dynamics in coherent tension. In art-making, the goal of transformation is organically contained in the process itself. Estrella's definition of social action as including a broad swath of activities – from contemplative practice to reconciliatory work, from policy and coalition work to political action – opens a wide door for

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the application of expressive arts approaches. Crossing boundaries of practice while integrating intermodal arts methods is the fascinating challenge she poses. Conflict transformation practitioners – boundary-crossers themselves – will find much to inspire, provoke and assist them in her work.

Paolo Knill, a pioneer in the field, adds spark to the work by detailing his experience of childhood play during the bombing raids of World War II. He gives readers a glimpse of his early genius in transforming fear, as he traces his innocent attachment to underground adventures in bomb shelters. Knill's theoretical and practical work issues fluidly from these accounts. He patiently outlines the bones of his approach, emphasizing de-centering as a vital way of moving into unpredictable terrain and widening possibilities. Implicit in his work is the truism that conflicts cannot be solved by the same thinking – or the same kind of thinking patterns – that spawned them. Patterns need to be disturbed and stuck places unstuck for novel results to unfold. De-centering is a way to achieve surprise, to access what Knill calls the logic of the imagination.

He assures readers, "When we use the arts as a mode of interaction, the impetus for discovery balances the fear of uncertainty if we provide an adequate motivating space." Knill then sets out touchstones for expressive arts practice in language that ventures from aesthetics to kinetics. Emphasizing connections between emotional resonance and psychophysical experience, he demonstrates how art-making literally builds capacity as participants experience accomplishment and the satisfaction inherent in beauty. He illustrates how parties in conflict can step out of their ordinary grammar and conversational logic to discover individual and group resilience that they had not known before. Knill's work sent me looking for the nearest expressive arts group to experience de-centering for myself!

But I could not stay away from my reading for long. Knill's chapter is followed by another pioneer in the field, Shaun McNiff, who recounts more of the field's history and its roots in therapeutic models and practices. His awareness of the "alchemical dynamics of the therapeutic studio" led him to postulate possibilities for change in larger social spheres. Writing of the facilitation role, McNiff stakes out a strong position against relativism or imagined distance from the parties with whom we engage. He explains his conviction that people in the "change business" need to maintain rigor and be willing to take sometimes extreme positions in the social project of upsetting unjust or dysfunctional orders. In this, he acknowledges the shadow – the destructive part of individuals and

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groups that M.C. Richards writes about when she frames the inner work of peacemakers as acknowledging and loving our own inner lepers. Conflict resolvers can be stymied by a sense of moral elevation that distances them not only from parties but from their own human complexities. McNiff's acknowledgement that "in the truly creative space, the shadow and soulful expression are inseparable" underlines the labyrinthine nature of conflict and the ways it implicates all of us, and is a more complex map than many conflict practitioners have been using. Finally, McNiff cautions that the only thing we can do wrong is to plan what we do before we do it. He reminds us that overly scripted approaches are antithetical to creativity. Fortunately, McNiff's seminal work yields new choices beyond the familiar poles of purely elicitive and purely prescriptive work.

Part II of the book is a rich exploration of issues, held to the light in ways that show various hues of expressive arts work. These three chapters take us to a clinic for Iraqis in Jordan, a Bosnian refugee camp in Slovenia, and to Israel. From her work in Israel, Ephrat Huss shows how art created a vehicle for Bedouin women to express their social and geographic confinement, and in the process reclaim some of their agency. Stopped from moving in traditional nomadic patterns through the desert landscape, the women discover they still have motion, dynamism and fluidity in their lives, even though it is no longer sparked from migration.

Debra Kalmanowitz and Bobby Lloyd outline how constructing homes in the woods and a quarry helped express and re-story loss and bereavement for Bosnian refugees. Inner and outer domains form a counterpoint in which people whose homes were lost recover hope and agency in their creative acts and deep experiences of accompaniment in their grief. In their retold stories, the correspondence between the concrete and the symbolic dimensions is revealed to be a Möbius strip – continuous and without clear boundaries.

Finally, Shanee Stepakoff and colleagues explore how, in the aftermath of ethnopolitical trauma, the initial reclamation of speech in a clinical setting can translate into public truth-telling. Their work with Iraqis who took refuge in Jordan has particular resonance for conflict-transformation practitioners concerned with eliciting more complex, nuanced stories and images beyond the stark cycles of blame and retribution. They suggest that recovery involves constellating a new sense of self that encompasses the trauma but is not consumed by it. Their work with poetry powerfully evokes the healing archetype, as if the words themselves actively seek the rich loam of resilience when loosed from the desiccated soil of trauma.

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Part III of the book chronicles projects where expressive arts have been used to re-animate, breathing vibrancy into geographies of loss. Carrie MacLeod takes us to Sierra Leone's crisis of youth in the aftermath of war. She describes her work using partnership language, with respect for the resilience and irrepressible spirit of people in Sierra Leone running through each word. This respect infuses MacLeod's methods, which resemble improvisation, not a fixed score. She uncovers powerful questions that frame inquiry and spark creativity in the midst of the turmoil of this post-war society. Her evocative language takes us to the heart of complexity, asking "What is peace?" while resisting easy formulas like "All arts heal." MacLeod challenges us to go beyond "givens" and examine the courage of those "who choose to live at the intersection where imagination encounters the unfathomable."

Gloria Simoneaux works with the canvas of the body, partnering with HIV-positive women in prison in a wash of color and passionate exploration that gives them tastes of fun – something largely missing from their confined lives. Her work also explores the terrain of intercultural collaboration as she details the confusions and challenges of working across contexts. Karen Abbs's piece on beauty in rough places is a meditation on contrasts: her words do not mute the horror of Darfur, yet they also trace ways that beauty seeps through the rough places. Her work is an account of quickening beauty amidst nearly unspeakable suffering: people who have lost their villages, their homes and family members find work in international agencies, only to find themselves vulnerable to new attacks. The partnership of Abbs and her colleagues must have come like a window in a concrete shelter, though one that could scarcely be big enough to light the dark corners of their layered losses. Her sensitivity to local ways of perceiving mental health and intervention underlines the gracefulness of her work; her focus on social change as well as critical incidents further deepens its impact. She writes, quoting Knill, of "aesthetic responsibility," and then describes how she discharged this responsibility with gentleness and attention to how expressive arts helped people de-center – to move away from the perceptions and experiences that kept them hurting or lost.

Sally Atkins takes us to Bolivia where the ongoing relationships she and her colleagues have developed have become a crucible for gift-giving. She powerfully frames her descriptions around Lewis Hyde's seminal book on gifting, sharing the spirals of giving and receiving that have characterized her involvement in Cochabamba. Atkins illustrates how expressive arts give her the confidence to engage without prescriptions,

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trusting that the inspiration for how to proceed in any given moment will come to her. And it does, revealing that the most profound gift is one of sharing presence beyond methodology or form. As presence is shared, social bonds are created, the kind of glue that enspirits people even in the midst of challenge. Atkins' work speaks to conflict prevention and transformation, posed as it is at the threshold of becoming, changing states in the midst of struggles.

The work of TAE Perú follows, where de-centering is described as a way of life. Again the reader encounters ghosts, this time the specters of thousands of disappeared and murdered people and their families, bereft. Again the reader encounters "othering," as we learn that the victims were largely Quechua-speaking peasants. The work of TAE evokes M.C. Richards when she writes of peace as a fusing of the opposites that overcomes the one-sidedness of violence. Richards elaborates:

> *In the psyche, violence creates trauma: consciousness breaks down. We lose our memories; we become deaf, dizzy, disoriented, disorganized, nonfunctioning. A violent emotional experience pulverizes us in the same way that an avalanche or a flood dissolves the structures of a lively town. But transformed from a ravaging force into a capacity for feeling, [this legacy of violence] is our warmth…[a]nd when it blows wildly and yet may be contained, it fills the forms of life with inspiration. (Richards 1998, p. 239)*

TAE's work in collage, in finding ways to dance with realities without being taken over by unchosen music, is an example of filling the forms of life with inspiration. It evidences daring and searing determination as it poses the challenge of living with our own contradictions and accepting those of others. TAE's work is not a denial of harsh realities; it is a work that sees squarely yet refuses to be cowed. It teaches a great deal.

Finally, Vivien Speiser and Samuel Schwartz describe their work with Ethiopian Jewish migrants in Israel. Detailing the harrowing circumstances under which many of them arrive, the authors explain how expressive arts were used to breathe life into "untold stories." Aware of the importance of assessment and relationship-building, they spent time listening and observing. Ethiopian post-army youth were identified as a group who tend to lose touch with Israeli society after their service. One of the most tangible – if unintended – outcomes of the workshops was increasing social cohesion within the Ethiopian youth community itself. Outsiders may not perceive the fissures within a community, yet generating new connections gave young people increased support in their

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quest for belonging in Israel. The authors' work is part of a patchwork of initiatives with vulnerable parts of the Ethiopian community, including middle-school students and single mothers. Their description of using arts for assessment and intervention raises new and interesting possibilities for conflict resolvers and peacemakers.

With Speiser's and Schwartz's chapter and the Afterword by MaryBeth Morand, the book ends. It is a book that I hope has a sequel; it is a book that offers answers to practitioners in social change work who know that the traditional approaches of identifying issues and problem-solving are often unsuccessful, and sometimes even escalate conflicts and worsen relationships. This book offers a series of exciting tools to address human myopia when trauma has made it even more difficult to see a spectrum of choices.

This is a book that knows that, in the end, we cannot know how to cross the threshold between defeat and resilience. There are no quick answers, no step-by-step guide to picking up pieces after the fragmentation of war and violence. Partnering is difficult: across chasms of privilege, we reach out to those who might not have limbs to grasp ours; whose hands have touched grief for which we have no corollary. Yet this book does not offer stories of paternalistic valor. The real heroes are clearly situated in each account: they are the people for whom the arts become routes out of despair, those who manage to weave even badly torn fabric into the beauty of new coherence. These people and the authors who write about them steadfastly refuse to accept tragedy as the only storyline. Instead, they gather and offer all the broken pieces to the crucible of expressive arts where a remarkable alchemy restores.

And so, to all who work to heal conflict, to those whose hope is frayed in diverse settings and broken places: here is a stream full of gold. The stream sparkles with surprise as it de-centers our assumptions about linear processes. It courses with possibility, carrying both gold and lead. The lead is the heaviness of understanding that linear processes of intervention are often too static and confrontational to yield transformative results. The gold is the realization that expressive arts theory and practice offer ways to find fertility even in eddies of desolation. Gold – ever more valuable than lead – is ours for the reading in this precious book. To Ellen and Stephen Levine, and to these authors, we owe deep appreciation for their gifts.

Michelle LeBaron
Vancouver, British Columbia
September 2010

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PART I

Principles

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1

Art Opens to the World

Expressive Arts and Social Action

Stephen K. Levine

In this chapter I attempt to lay a theoretical foundation for the field of expressive arts and social change. In order to do so, I first have to conduct a brief survey of the development of the field of expressive arts itself.

As a specific discipline, expressive arts had its beginnings during the 1970s at Lesley College Graduate School (now Lesley University) through the work of Shaun McNiff, Paolo Knill, Norma Canner, Elizabeth McKim and others. At the time the field was called "expressive therapy." Shaun McNiff has explained in *The Arts in Psychotherapy* (1981, significantly revised as *Integrating the Arts in Therapy: History, Theory, and Practice*, 2009) and elsewhere that the word "expressive" came to him from outside, in the context of gaining support from initial funding sources. In some ways, the name is a misnomer, insofar as it has been taken to mean that art is "self-expression," the outward representation of inner feelings. This interpretation fit with the prevailing ethos of the times – "Express yourself!" – but it is not a helpful starting point for understanding the work of the arts.

Even at the time, it was understood that the arts do more than express outwardly what is felt inwardly, that in fact artistic expression cannot be reduced to pre-existing psychological states. Indeed, in contradistinction to the individual creative arts therapies, which usually begin from an established psychological framework, expressive therapy called for a "theory indigenous to the arts," a way of understanding that would be appropriate to aesthetic experience itself, not based upon another foundation.

The beginnings of such a theory were formulated by Paolo Knill with his notion of "intermodality." An obvious difference between expressive therapy and the creative arts therapies is that the former draws upon all

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the arts, rather than working only within one specialized form (be it visual art, dance, drama, poetry, etc.). *Minstrels of Soul*, Knill's first book in English, had the subtitle *Intermodal Expressive Therapy*, indicating that what is distinctive about the field is its intermodal character (Knill, Barba and Fuchs 2004). This character of intermodality makes sense once we realize that artistic disciplines are rooted in the different modalities of sensory experience. We can make visual art because we see; we can make music because we hear; we dance because we move, etc. And all of these sensory modalities are united in the common-sense experience of having a body. It is the same body that sees, hears, and moves. In fact, the separation and extreme specialization of the arts in modern times is itself a recent historical phenomenon. Art-making has traditionally been intermodal within the context of dramatic or ritual performance. Only the removal of the arts from everyday life has enabled practitioners to explore their specialized and formal capacities. As contemporary and post-modern art has developed, a renewed interest in interdisciplinary work has also emerged. Traditional artistic boundaries have been erased, and cross-disciplinary work is now common.

In addition, it was clear to practitioners of the expressive arts that the basic framework of the field had an artistic rather than psychological base. Both McNiff and Knill were artists (a painter and a musician respectively) before they were therapists. As the field developed during the 1980s and 1990s, the word "arts" was gradually placed between "expressive" and "therapy." The International Expressive Arts Therapy Association (IEATA) replaced the National Expressive Therapy Association (NETA) as the primary professional association in the field and deliberately included "Arts" in its title, as did many of the books that attempted to lay the theoretical foundations for the field (see Levine and Levine 1999, and Knill, Levine and Levine 2005).

This shift in nomenclature was significant. It not only rooted the field in its proper place, it also made it possible to extend this work in other directions outside of psychotherapy. IEATA opened registration to expressive arts educators and consultants as well as therapists, and programs were developed that included these new initiatives. At the European Graduate School (EGS), the doctoral program in Expressive Arts Therapy changed its name to Expressive Arts: Therapy, Education, and Consulting (including coaching under the term "Consulting"). It has now been extended to include the term "Social Change," indicating a further development of the field, of which the present book is another indication.

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The evolution of a field is an interesting phenomenon, often reflecting changes in the wider society. If the field itself does not grow concurrently, it risks becoming outdated and irrelevant. During the past two decades psychotherapy has lost some of its cachet. Partly this reflects its professionalization: what was once an open, innovative (and sometimes undisciplined) field of practice has become codified, licensed, and restricted to those with licensed professional training. In addition, the concern with abusive practices, though important in protecting clients, has had the side effect of making therapists wary of trying anything not already approved or anything that could be considered "unsafe." To a great extent, the dynamic energy that had marked expressive therapy practice in the seventies has migrated elsewhere, to the practice of art itself, or to the new fields of coaching and consulting. Some practitioners became expressive arts coaches; others turned their attention to education and called themselves expressive arts educators. It became clear that although the work of expressive arts had begun in psychotherapy, the basic principles could be extended to other areas of practice. Most recently, this has included the field of social change. Under the direction of Ellen Levine, EGS began a graduate certificate program in Expressive Arts and Social Change (now developed into a full master's degree program in Expressive Arts in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding; see Chapter 2 in this volume). Students began to apply the work of expressive arts outside of the restricted settings of the clinic, school, or corporation to the wider world of communities and conflict-laden social groups.

We need to explore the theoretical foundation underlying this new development. What are the principles of expressive arts that open work in the field to broader social concerns? In order to understand this, we have to look at the basis of artistic expression itself. In several articles and books I have tried to formulate this through the use of the concept of *poiesis* (Levine 1997). The word *poiesis* is taken from classical Greek, originally signifying the act of making in general, and artistic making in particular. I go back to this word in order to make it easier to understand art-making from a different perspective than we are accustomed to, one that will perhaps shed light on the subject in a new way.

What is implied in the concept of *poiesis* is that art-making is not divorced from other forms of production. It is not a specialized activity radically separated from others; rather it is an extension and development of the basic capacity of human beings to shape their worlds. The human being is distinct from other creatures in that it is not pre-adapted to a

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particular environment. Instead it has the ability to build radically different worlds suitable (or not) to life in a wide diversity of surroundings. In building its world, the human shapes the environment, and as it does so, it shapes itself. *World-building is self-building.* This phenomenon accounts for the wide variety of cultures that exist in the world and the various ways that humans have changed their behaviors and world-views accordingly. If there is an essential quality of being human, it does not lie in a particular way of living but in this capacity to shape ourselves and others according to our needs.

Of course, this does not imply that all forms of world-building are appropriate. As we can see in our current understanding of environmental crisis, it is quite possible for us to mis-shape worlds, and ourselves with it. However, the very fact that we have made this world as it is should awaken us to the possibility of changing it. *Poiesis is always possible* (Levine 1999, p.31).

What role can the arts play in bringing about the possibility of social change? First we have to understand art-making within the broader perspective of *poiesis.* The arts are a particular form of making that differentiate themselves by showing themselves as having been made. Whatever else art is (and that is certainly a question without any agreed-upon answer), it *shows* something and it shows itself as having been made. We could say that, as something that shows, art needs to be seen; we could even say in this sense that art is always *performative.* Even visual art is "performed" in the viewing of it; it requires an audience in order to be what it is. This does not mean that works that have gone unpublished are not artworks. It only signifies that they have the capacity to be seen (heard, read) by others, even if that never comes to pass.

By showing itself in the mode of existing-as-being-seen, art indicates its quality of irreality, its ability to create an alternative world of the imagination. We know that the actor playing Oedipus does not actually tear out his eyes; nor is there anyone really murdered in *Hamlet.* Rather the work creates an imaginary world in which it exists. This quality of irreality does not make it any less effective; on the contrary, the limitation from realistic constraints means that the work can affect us on an even deeper level than the actual event that it depicts.

At the same time, this alternative world of imagination always takes place within the literal reality in which we exist. The imaginal world of the play, for example, happens in the real world of the theater. But more importantly, it always happens within the world in which we actually live our daily lives. *Hamlet* today happens in a different world than it did

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in Shakespeare's time. The production itself changes, even if we try to make it "authentically" Elizabethan. And we see it differently; it occurs within a different horizon of understanding than it did originally. We live in a different historical world and we are shaped differently by it; both our behavior and our perceptions have changed.

Because the work happens within our world, it has the capacity to affect us. The work "touches" us; we are "moved" by it. We call this our "aesthetic response" to the work. The term "aesthetic response" has often been understood in expressive arts therapy as the artistic response of the therapist to the client (e.g. by writing a poem in response to the client's artwork), but it properly means the *client*'s affective response to what he or she has made. When the work results in an aesthetic response on the part of the client, we can say that it has been effective, it has touched what we can call their "effective reality." The power of art is that, although itself existing only in imaginal reality, it can nevertheless touch people's literal reality and have an impact upon them.

This experience of aesthetic response can also be seen as the proper psychological point of reference for aesthetic experience. Art is not self-expression; it does not merely give an outward form for what is already there in our inner worlds. This should be obvious from any cursory reflection on the arts. Can we think of *War and Peace* as an expression of Tolstoy's self? It's not even clear what that would mean. The excellence of the artist consists in his or her ability to transcend the self, to be able to imagine the experience of others and the world in which they live. Of course, *War and Peace* could only have been written by Tolstoy, but that does not mean it is a representation *of* Tolstoy's psyche. In fact the book is properly understood as an imaginative presentation of Russian society during the Napoleonic era in both war and peace. It was made *by* Tolstoy, but it is not a depiction *of* Tolstoy. This misunderstanding of the nature of art could only have taken place within a world-view shaped exclusively by the psychological perspective.

Of course we could say that the impulse to make art often begins with an inner psychic state. However, as soon as the artist begins to shape his or her material, that impulse becomes transformed. The work starts to shape itself, and the role of the artist is to allow it to find its proper form, rather than to force it into a pre-conceived mold. This is why novelists often talk about their characters having lives of their own which the author can only follow at their dictation. Certainly the artist must step back from the initial creative effort and make any necessary revisions,

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but this is a necessity to be found in the work itself, not in the mind of its creator.

We must get beyond psychological reductionism in order to properly understand the process of art-making and the artwork itself. The work does not express the *self*; it expresses a *world*. It starts with me, but it then finds its own shape which I can only follow. The proper psychological point of reference for the work is in fact in the way that it *affects* me, both in the making of it and in the experience of it once it is made. That the work is not an expression of the self does not mean that it lacks psychological significance. On the contrary, precisely because it goes beyond myself, it can affect me in a powerful way; it can touch me deeply and change my way of being in the world. This is what Rilke meant when, in his poem, "Archaic Torso of Apollo," in which he refers to viewing the fragmentary remains of a Greek sculpture, he speaks not about my experience of looking at the work but about the way in which the work looks at *me*. In the last line of the poem, the sculpture itself addresses the viewer and says, "You must change your life" (Rilke 1984, p.61). Of course, when we read this poem, we also understand that it is not only the poet but we ourselves who must change our lives.

To deny that the work is to be understood as self-expression, then, is not to take away its power but rather to make this power comprehensible. Otherwise, what possible effect would it have on myself for me merely to see what I am already feeling? Its power comes precisely from bringing me something new that comes to me as a surprise. To say that this new element comes from the "unconscious" does not help here; "unconscious" merely means "not known." To locate this unknown and therefore surprising thing in the psyche is merely to try to find some justification for our psychological prejudice. Unwittingly this prejudice makes the psychological impact of the work impossible to understand.

Moreover, not only does the work affect us emotionally, it also has the capacity to change our understanding of ourselves and of the world around us. The work can be a re-description of the world, a presentation of an alternative reality that helps us see ourselves and others differently. In the philosophical tradition, beginning with Plato, art is understood as semblance, as an imitation of what is already there, a poor substitute for the real thing. It may give pleasure but it cannot provide truth. This view of art only makes sense within a perspective in which reflective thought is understood as providing access to a form of existence beyond change. Eternal truth, in this view, cannot take sensible form but can only be

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understood by the intellect freed from the deceptions and changes brought about in sense perception.

Contemporary philosophy, beginning with Nietzsche, has rejected this metaphysical assumption of a second world of unchanging truth that lies beyond the senses and is only accessible to the intellect abstracted from the body and the world. For Martin Heidegger, the founder of this strand of contemporary thought, existence itself is temporal; being can only be understood within the perspective of time. Human existence is a being-in-the-world, a world that comes to be and passes away. The very characteristics that traditional philosophy attempted to deny are precisely what characterize the human being. We are sensible beings, we experience the world and others through our senses, and we *make* sense of what we experience. Any other view is an illusion based upon a metaphysical presupposition of eternal presence, what Jacques Derrida has called "the metaphysics of presence" (Derrida 1973, p.63).

If our existence is temporal, that implies that it is also historical. We are born into a world that we have not made; Heidegger even says we are "thrown" into this world. In this sense, we do not have the ability to make our world out of nothing, to act as omnipotent creators. Rather, we are already made by this world; I come into it at a certain time, with a gender, race, class, nationality, etc., that I have not chosen. At the same time I am not determined by what has been; rather I always have the capacity to *respond* to what has been given to me. In our own time, we have seen how extensive is our ability to change what we have been. I can embrace a different religion, move to another country, rise or fall in social class and even change my gender. Nevertheless I will always be marked by what I have been. There is no erasing the past, only different ways of living it.

History is what we make of what is made of us, as Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy continually reminds us. Within the framework of expressive arts, we could say that *poiesis* implies the capacity to respond to the world in which we find ourselves. We suffer, both individually and collectively, when we find ourselves unable to respond, when this capacity for poietic action is restricted and we experience ourselves as being in a helpless situation. It is precisely because we are capable of making our world in a different way that we experience ourselves as helpless when we are unable to do so. The work of the change agent in the field of expressive arts, then, is to restore the capacity for *poiesis* that the individual or community has lost, and to help them expand the range of play within which they can act.

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In this process, art-making can play an essential role. By creating an alternative world of the imagination, the artwork shows possibilities that are absent or dormant within our everyday awareness. Moreover, the work takes us away from this everyday world within which we experience ourselves as unable to act; we could say that it "decenters" us from this world (Knill *et al.* 2005, p.83). In so doing it frees us up for new possibilities that were not apparent within our limited horizon of understanding.

Art-making is itself a sensory-affective experience that gives participants a experience of their own capacities for action. Because it affects us through the body and the emotions, art-making can provide experiences that restore us to a feeling of being fully alive. And in making the work, by acting within the limited frame of the materials and the time and space available, we recover our capacity to be effective in the world, something that we have lost in the helpless situation in which we find ourselves.

Social change is only possible when people in a community have a sense of their own capacity to act, when they become aware of their resources and see themselves as able to re-make the world in which they live. The task of the expressive arts change agent is not to enter a community with a pre-existing plan, attempting to steer community action in an anticipated direction. This would be similar to trying to make a work of art by forcing the materials into a form that corresponds to an idea in the mind (a traditional view of art-making that even Karl Marx held).

Rather, the work of social change begins with trying to understand the world in which people already live. Only then can we see possibilities of responding to that reality. The role of the change agent from the perspective of expressive arts, like the role of the expressive arts therapist, is to help the community find its own resources and envision new ways of living together that draw upon them. By helping people engage in community art practices together, not only can they regain an awareness of their own poietic capacity, but they also can find new forms of being together, types of association that aid in reviving the sense of community itself.

When a social group is in a helpless situation, whether due to poverty, oppression, natural disaster, or other factors, individuals typically experience themselves as isolated and cut off from others. One of the things that the experience of making art together does is to restore the sense of a living community, of being part of a whole that is larger than oneself. This is "solidarity," the experience of being together with others

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that is an essential part of being in the world. This solidarity often takes place within a celebratory setting, one in which the joy of singing and dancing together can bind a social group in a mutual feeling of kinship, but the arts are also capable of holding the experience of mourning what an individual or group has lost. Mourning and celebration are two essential ways in which art-making can touch the essence of being human. Both our tears and our laughter hold us together.

The work of the social change agent in the expressive arts ultimately rests upon what Knill *et al.* call "aesthetic responsibility" (2005, p.138). We are responsible for shaping our interventions so as to help the people we are working with regain the capacity for creative action that they have lost. In order to do so, we have to be willing to go into a community without a prearranged agenda, to be sensitive to what we find, and to use our own imagination in helping others to transcend their limitations and become aware of the unexplored possibilities that are available to them.

This process normally includes a liminal phase, one in which we are unable to predict or control what will happen. In this sense, we can say that our work is the opposite of the omnipotent and omniscient creator-god, who knows what he does and can control the outcome. Rather we put ourselves into the difficult state of non-knowing, "giving up control in order to achieve mastery," as Knill has often remarked in conversation. This requires a tolerance for chaos, an ability to improvise and a love of play. We do not know what will emerge, but we have the faith that it is possible for a surprise to come, for a solution to be found that was not envisioned by anyone, including ourselves. This faith is based on the belief, borne out by experience, that individuals, groups and communities have the resources to deal with their difficulties even if they do not recognize or acknowledge these resources.

Social change and social action require a humble and respectful attitude on the part of the change agent. We need to have an "appreciative curiosity," in Herbert Eberhart's words (2002, p.126) about the situation in which the community finds itself in order to help the members of the group become aware of their resources and to help them regain an awareness of their capacity for building the world anew. Human existence is essentially poietic. *Poiesis* itself happens only in the world with others. We have made this world together; this means that we can make it differently. The particular power of the expressive arts in the field of social change is to help us find our ability to make a new world together. Only by doing so can we leave to future generations a world which they will find worthy of response.

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2

From Social Change to Art Therapy and Back Again

A Memoir

Ellen Levine

The extension of expressive arts therapy to the arena of social change has a particular personal meaning for me, one based upon my own history. It has become the thread that runs through all of my life, connecting the different parts. On another level, it feels like a re-emergence of an impulse for change that rose up almost 50 years ago – a time when we were playing with difficulties, helping voiceless communities find their voices through the forming and shaping of works of art, engaging non-artists in artistic practice, and bringing the work into the public sphere.

I can trace this interest back to my beginnings. I grew up in the 1950s and early 1960s in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts where my life revolved around school, art lessons, and the synagogue, known as the "Temple." I attended religious school on Sundays and studied Hebrew there twice a week and later, as a teenager, became involved in youth group activities.

My parents, in reaction to their parents, had become Reform Jews. They rejected the binding laws and strictures of the Orthodox practice in which they were raised, a practice which encouraged separation, in favor of one that brought them into closer contact with the dominant culture. The services were conducted primarily in English rather than Hebrew. Every year there was an art show at the Temple and, when I was 11, I submitted an oil painting and won a first prize.

Our Temple was very small at the time, and until we had our own building we met for services in the local Unitarian Church. I remember my parents arguing heatedly with my grandparents about religious practice. Yet, throughout this period of doubt and transition, my parents

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always tried to articulate certain values important to the Jewish tradition, especially those of justice and fairness. We had a charity box at home where we were encouraged to put money every week and bring it to the Temple. This act of *tzedakah* or the giving of charity, based on the Hebrew word for righteousness, is one of the primary values of the Jewish tradition and one which my parents emphasized.

I remember feeling proud that my rabbi, together with many religious leaders, marched with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama. His social engagement was a model for me as a child, growing into adolescence. I felt his passion for social justice, which he articulated often in his sermons. This resonated with me very strongly.

At the age of 16, in the summer of 1963, I went to Israel on a trip organized by the National Federation of Temple Youth. With a group of 40 American teenagers, I toured the country in a bus and spent a few weeks working on a kibbutz, picking and packing fruit. This experience was pivotal for me. It was not the first time that I had been away from home, but it was my first experience of travel and of being in a different world. I was captivated by the spirit of the country, by what I perceived as the strength and tenacity of the people that I met. The life that they were living seemed in stark contrast to my sheltered suburban life.

When I look back now on this experience, I realize how much it excluded the reality of the situation – the experience of the other side. I met army officers and farmers, tanned and muscular men and women, all presented as heroes. I was shown the monuments to the wars; the rusted relics of tanks littered all the roads. Jerusalem was a maze of cordoned-off areas. It was not possible to go into the Old City. This seemed like a tragic situation that needed to be rectified.

The Arabs were depicted as demonized "Others," the ones who stood in our way. Our guides took us to hilltops to show us the great progress of the Israeli city building and were quick to point out the Arab villages right beside the cities where there were dirt roads and broken-down houses with goats and chickens in the yards. I was told that Arabs were "lazy and obviously did not care about their land."

I came back from Israel, finished high school in 1964 and left home to attend a small women's college in a rural part of Massachusetts. America was in the throes of major change. The Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement were becoming more and more intense and, at the same time, I was beginning to wake up. The self-satisfied slumber of suburban life was giving way to a sense of outrage about a war in a distant land that seemed more and more senseless. Many of my friends were in danger

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of being drafted into the military if they did not stay in school. Some friends were going to fight in Vietnam. Racism was increasingly being confronted with civil disobedience, and Northerners were going South to participate in marches and sit-ins. Among other tumultuous events 1964 was the year of the murder of three civil rights activists, Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. Goodman and Schwerner were white, and they were also Jewish. This made a big impression on me. At the same time a countercultural revolution was building momentum, based on the rejection of authority and a new sense of openness and freedom. I began experimenting on both a personal and political level and, most of all, I wanted to take some action in the world.

During college I joined together with several classmates to create a tutoring group. Every week we would hire a bus and travel to Roxbury, a black ghetto community near Boston. We arranged with the local public school to pair up with some of the children and visit them in their homes in order to help them with their homework. During the summer of my third year in college I connected with a Jewish social service agency in the South Bronx, working with children and families who were living in extreme poverty. I was a "junior social worker," entering chaotic homes where I witnessed great suffering. This was an eye-opening experience for me.

I studied philosophy and sociology in college, where my critical consciousness was activated by several important teachers and mentors. In college I encountered the work of the great continental philosophers in existentialism and phenomenology. I studied Hegel, Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, among others, and wrote my undergraduate thesis on the philosophical roots of the New Left and the hippies, looking at Merleau-Ponty's notions of the "lived body" and "lived experience," trying to understand how his work could shed light on the actions and desires of the new movements for social change, with their stress on immediacy and directness.

At this point several impulses came together: I knew that I wanted to participate in the action of the times, to be of service in the world, and to understand what was going on all around me. I wanted to be able to articulate and to think about the movement of ideas, feeling strongly that ideas have the power to change the world, but I was primarily interested in changing the world – not only thinking about it but also acting upon it.

It was this convergence that led me to pursue training as a social worker in 1968. I went to the University of Chicago, where I signed up

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to focus on the Community Organization track. I had learned about the work of Saul Alinsky in the poor neighborhoods of Chicago and wanted to do that work (and get a degree). I felt that in order for change to happen it would be more effective to focus on whole communities, rather than individuals or even groups.

I arrived in Chicago in September of 1968, just after thousands of protesters had been beaten up and arrested at the Democratic Convention, my boyfriend of the time among them. At the same time I joined a movement to support Marlene Dixon, a sociology professor fired by the University because of her radical political views, and ended up at a 16-day sit-in in the administration building. I found that political activity was much more interesting than sitting in the classroom, and that the program in Community Organization was devoted to training people to be directors of social service agencies. It was definitely not the direction in which I wanted to head.

After spending one year in Chicago I went to New York City to study philosophy. I still had the sense that ideas were the key to understanding the world, and I was led by my desire to hone my thinking as well as to participate in social action. By 1969, when I arrived at the New School for Social Research, the countercultural and anti-war political landscape was very alive. I studied, but I also became involved in many demonstrations and actions against the Vietnam War and went to jail several times. I lived in a political commune and felt that I was part of a turning point in America, one in which I was being shaped by events at the same time as I was trying to shape them.

After 1971 I found myself in Canada, thinking it would be good to take a short break from the intensity of what had been going on in the United States. In a new relationship with Steve Levine, with a master's degree in philosophy and beginning a teaching career at York University in Toronto, I also felt the call to be of service. I found out about an art therapy training program and decided to investigate. Having been disillusioned by the Community Organization program in Chicago, I began to rethink the practice of therapy and to consider the emancipatory possibilities of individual work as important for change. I knew also that I wanted to understand myself and felt that my own therapy was the next step. Visual art had always been important to me; I had painted throughout almost my entire life, and the idea of combining art with therapy seemed intriguing.

It was this step into a psychoanalytically oriented art therapy training and a graduate course in Freud that launched me into working

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with the arts in therapy. I trained first in art therapy and then later in psychoanalytic child psychotherapy. At the same time, I began doctoral studies, focusing on the role of symbolism in psychoanalytic theory. At the time, the psychoanalytic lens seemed to provide me with a rich and complex understanding of the formation of the person. It informed and enriched the work and play that I was doing with children and provided a framework for understanding the "hidden order" of art.

Discovering the work of D.W. Winnicott provided a thread or link that brought together a number of my interests. His formulation of the transitional area of experience as a site for play, art, culture-building, and imagination excited me. I could see how political action and social change, particularly the activities of the 1960s, could also be understood as taking place on a kind of playground. Winnicott's work inspired me to think that all activity in which humans engage, if it is to have a transformative quality, should involve the back and forth movement of play.

After a number of years of practicing as a child analyst, a play and art therapist, I had the feeling that I wanted to situate my work in a larger context. I began to find private practice too isolating; again, the call to be of service was beckoning. I wanted to work in a social agency where I could collaborate with colleagues in other disciplines and to work with people who could not otherwise afford my services. I wanted to be in a more public situation.

After completing my doctorate I returned to school to finish the degree I had started in social work and began working at the Hincks Treatment Centre in Toronto. In addition to clinical work with children and parents, I have had the opportunity over the last 20 years to teach and train students in the disciplines of social work, psychology, and psychiatry, and to collaborate with colleagues in those disciplines. While at the Hincks I came to see how many of the psychological difficulties of my clients, often poor single mothers and their children, many of them recent immigrants, were connected with their serious social and economic problems as well.

As a recent immigrant myself, the move to Canada put my involvement in political activity mostly on hold; at the same time, the political movements for change began to subside in North America. Despite this, I continued to carry within me an impulse toward involvement in social action and social change. My work in individual and group therapy continued to absorb and interest me, yet I always felt there was something missing. The impulse toward action on a larger scale took the

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form of helping to shape the direction of an alternative school, which my children attended, and of becoming involved in an organization called "Parents for Peace." In addition, Steve and I did anti-nuclear workshops geared toward helping peace activists with issues of burnout in their work. These workshops used the arts, particularly visual art and movement, as a means of restoring hope and reinvigorating those engaged in political organizing.

However, it was ultimately the encounter with the field of expressive arts therapy that helped me to reconnect with my roots in the creative world of the 1960s in America. In 1985 I met Paolo Knill, Elizabeth McKim, Shaun McNiff, Stan Strickland, and others at Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. What struck me at that time was the community-oriented playfulness and joyousness of their work, how it came directly out of the arts, and how it embodied an emancipatory spirit of collective and collaborative art-making.

My connection to this new field began to shake the foundations of my prior training and encouraged me to begin to question several aspects of the psychoanalytic project. Psychoanalysis seemed problematic in several ways: first, in its emphasis upon the individual rather than the community, and upon deficits and pathology rather than resources; second, in its reduction of the person to a set of explanations deriving from the experience of the past; and third, in making a one-to-one correspondence between the artwork and the life or personality of the artist. By contrast, I found that expressive arts therapy placed the emphasis upon an individual's resources and capacities, and promoted a notion of the artwork as opening up to and as being part of the world, pointing to the present and to a possible future. In the expressive arts, the artwork is seen not as a mirror of the self or even primarily as an expression of the self of the artist. Rather the work always goes beyond itself and has a multiplicity of meanings.

By far the most important impact of my initial encounter with expressive arts was the reconnection with my own art-making, particularly with painting and performance. I began to paint again in a whole new way, to develop a style for myself. My painting had always been in an abstract style, often using organic shapes borrowed from the body or the landscape. As my work began to develop, my style changed, and I started to work with images of social suffering. I began incorporating newspaper photographs that had a strong impact on me into the paintings, extending their borders or framing and highlighting them with abstract forms. Many of the images have come from the Israeli–

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Palestinian conflict or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I have been particularly drawn to photos of men and women holding photographs of children and young people who were killed, missing, or lost. I have felt that the paintings with these photos embodied a sense of witness and testimony that has been part of my work in expressive arts therapy.

Years before this work with disturbing images of the suffering brought about by war and violence, I took classes in clown and began to develop my sense of the outrageous and ridiculous, another part of what it means to be human. The work in expressive arts has a comic as well as a tragic side; it encompasses the full range of our humanity. I ultimately started to perform with my husband as part of an old Jewish clown couple, "Max" and "Sadie," exaggerations of the most absurd parts of ourselves. We continue to perform together.

Working in the field of expressive arts felt like a homecoming – a return to my own art-making, which I had neglected on and off for many years, and which was just as much of a longing or need as my impulse towards social engagement and social action. I did not fully realize at the time how much this new field would begin to influence me personally, to have an impact on the way in which I conducted my work with children and families, and how I would ultimately connect it to the impulse toward change at the larger societal level.

Expressive arts therapy has play at its base. It stresses the centrality of play as a way out of the locked situations into which individuals, groups and communities often fall. In difficult circumstances, the range of play is constricted. Engaging in exploratory, experimental and improvisatory processes can open up the range of play and help people to envision new ways of being and acting. Play can also lead to imagining new ways of changing or shaping the world we live in.

Over the years, at the European Graduate School in Switzerland (which I helped found in 1996), we have developed a philosophical framework to underpin the field of expressive arts, drawing upon the idea of *poiesis*: the act of shaping or making in which all human beings engage. When human beings find themselves in "dire straits" situations, the experience of the capacity for making or shaping, for taking action and feeling effective, is lost. It is precisely the task of expressive arts to bring individuals, groups and communities back into the experience of *poiesis*, the capacity to take effective action in the world.

I began to see the work that I was doing with the arts in therapy as having an emancipatory quality, as embedded in the world and as world-making. I shifted my attention from focusing on the artwork as an

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expression of the self of the artist to seeing the work as pointing toward the world, as an expression of the human capacity for *poiesis,* and as an opening to the expansion of the range of possibilities. By engaging in the art-making process and by shaping works that have a life of their own – songs, dances, paintings, poems, plays, stories – human beings are also taking part in the fundamental work of being human.

It was this way of seeing the making of the work of art and the work itself that prompted me to begin to think critically about the exclusively clinical focus of expressive arts up to this point. Most of the students in the field were training to become therapists and to work in mental health settings. It seemed to me our principles and practices could be turned toward broader, more diverse, and more complex social issues.

Following this impulse, Steve and I began to work in parts of the world that had previously been foreign to us. For example, we had taught several times in Israel. Now we traveled to East Jerusalem, part of the Occupied Territories, to work with Palestinian students. I was so excited to be there that in my naiveté I began the workshop by saying, "I'm so happy to be in this part of Israel!" After a long silence, a voice rang out, "This is *not* Israel." Fortunately the students forgave us, and we had a wonderful experience with them teaching clown and playing together. The reality of the Palestinian experience began to hit home. I had already begun to understand the political situation in the Middle East differently, but getting to know those who had been presented as the "Other" on a personal level added a new dimension to my understanding.

Two years later most of these same students came to EGS and began to study in the masters and doctoral programs in expressive arts therapy. From 2002 to 2005 we worked with mixed groups of both Palestinians and Israelis. On both sides most of the students were working professionals: therapists and counselors. Some (though not all) were artists, but everyone was interested in the arts and in using the arts in their helping work.

In the first days of the first summer with these students, there was a tremendous amount of tension in my group (I was the leader of one of the core groups – a group that would stay together for the whole three-week period and take various courses together). While they worked and lived with Palestinians living in Israel (so-called "Israeli Arabs"), none of the Israelis had ever directly encountered a Palestinian who lived in the West Bank or Gaza. Nor did they fully realize beforehand that they would be studying with Palestinians in Switzerland. In fact some Israeli students expressed upset and distress at being in the same classes with

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Palestinians. Both groups socialized, ate, and shared rooms separately. There was no interaction except in the classroom, and even then it was limited.

In the group there were Palestinian men who had spent years in Israeli prisons, who had bullets in their bodies, and who had experienced the loss of family members due to the conflict. There were Israeli women whose husbands, sons, and fathers had died in past wars and whose sons and daughters were currently serving in the army during that summer. There were some Israelis who could not even look at their fellow Palestinian students, let alone speak to them. There were Palestinian men who kept leaving the classroom to smoke in order to relieve the tension they were experiencing.

At the end of the first week the ice had been broken to some extent by my efforts to openly acknowledge the feelings that were present in the group, helping the students to begin to tell their stories to each other and encouraging them to work together on mutual learning goals and art-making projects in relation to the curriculum. However, the atmosphere was still constrained.

One night a few of the students organized a spontaneous gathering in our large community room. They brought out musical instruments, especially drums. Several of the Palestinian men began to play the drums. An infectious groove was established and everyone starting dancing. What was interesting was that both the Israelis and the Palestinians danced in a similar style – the typical hip movements of Middle Eastern dance, movements that resembled "belly dance." The dancing got more and more intense, everyone releasing the tension that had been held for so many days. Palestinian women danced with Israeli women. Palestinian men danced together in typical fashion (Dabka – traditional Palestinian folk dancing) and others (men and women) joined them. They proudly showed each other certain movements. All the students from other countries joined in, mixing everything up.

That night, the dancing went on for a long time and everyone danced until they were exhausted. The next day, I definitely noticed a shift in my group. It felt like something had been released or "cracked open." The tensions were not gone but there seemed to be much more ease in the encounters.

By the end of the three-week session there had been a dramatic shift between the two groups. Many of the Israelis were sad to leave their Palestinian fellow students. They knew that it would be very difficult to connect once they were back in Israel. Similarly, the Palestinians felt that

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they were going back to a very limited and confined existence. They were all looking forward to returning to Switzerland, a kind of "free zone" for both their bodies and their minds. Through the mediation of the dancing both sides were able to break through the impasse and come to live with each other despite the conflicts between them. Over the next two years the students grew even closer. There were love affairs and promises of continuing the relationships once they were back home. However, the difficulty of the political situation intervened and prevented these hopes from being realized. I can only wonder about the long-term effects of their experience together.

After working with and getting to know the Palestinian students at EGS I was invited to the West Bank to help set up a program for children, similar to the one in Toronto called the "Spiral Garden," an imaginative and lively summer art and garden project on the grounds of a large hospital for children with disabilities. My colleagues and I were initially sponsored by Doctors Without Borders to conduct a pilot project. We traveled to Ramallah, passing through several checkpoints and stopping on the way at Dheishe Refugee Camp. Although the project was ultimately abandoned, I received a first-hand introduction to both the difficulty of everyday life in the West Bank and to the daily humiliations that Palestinians had to live through as they tried to travel to their work and places of residence. Truly, these experiences have shaped me as much as I have shaped them, altering my way of understanding both the world and my work in it. Certainly, the messages that I received from my childhood Jewish education and my first trip to Israel as a teenager were contradicted by the reality of the situation that I encountered as an adult years later.

Subsequently, in 2007, I decided to open a certificate program in Expressive Arts and Social Change at the EGS. In the program we explored the ways in which the arts could be used to help communities in conflict, transition, and breakdown. Students came from all over the world to study and to take the learning back to their communities, seeing what projects already existed there which they could join, or where they could create new projects.

The certificate program has now been expanded and changed into a full master's degree in Expressive Arts in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding. This is the only graduate program that I know of that focuses on making the connection between the principles and practices of expressive arts, and promoting peace and justice. Students in this program are able to work in diverse situations both in their local

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communities and in international contexts. It is my hope that the impulse to change the world and to engage the arts will not fade away, but gain more momentum through the existence of programs such as this one. It is clearly the right time to be moving our work away from an exclusively clinical focus and opening up to the wider world.

Even as the problems of the world seem so intractable, I am convinced that we need to maintain our spirit of play and possibility. Perhaps this will continue to allow us to live in uncertain times without retreating into the safety of our own private concerns, and to keep us attuned to what we find in front of us as materials for transformation. I still believe we can play in the ruins of the old ways and see what new and more life-affirming forms will emerge.

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3

Social Activism within Expressive Arts "Therapy"

What's in a Name?

Karen Estrella

The arts have a rich history of being used as a catalyst for social change. One has only to think of the protest and freedom songs of the 1960s and their impact on the civil rights movement, the poetry of the "personal is political" feminists, the impact of the Vietnam Memorial on a disaffected generation of veterans and family survivors, the street theater protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle, or the role of the AIDS quilt or the graffiti art of Keith Haring in the AIDS activism movement, to recognize the power of the arts for consciousness-raising, empowerment, advocacy, protest, and provocation (Reed 2005). The expressive arts used within communities have even been said to be activist by their very nature, in that they radically expand our notion of who can be considered an "artist" (Cohen-Cruz 2002).

This chapter seeks to examine the interplay between social action and expressive arts therapy (or expressive therapy – these two terms will be used interchangeably). I will briefly examine the ways in which social activism within expressive arts therapy and expressive arts practice in community and education is a continuing tradition. Next I will describe the dilemmas of working within the system and outside the system – outlining how the therapeutic is political and the political is therapeutic. Finally I will discuss possible directions for areas of continued conversation and describe the importance of developing curriculum for educating expressive artists in social change principles.

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SOCIAL ACTIVISM WITHIN EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY: A CONTINUING TRADITION

For the past 35 years expressive arts therapists have been exploring the use of the arts for change within the context of mental health, community, and education. Early expressive arts practitioners emerged out of the countercultural energy of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, encouraged by the emerging multimedia and performance arts movements, as well as the human potential movement, to break through conventional boundaries of self-expression and artistic expression and to bring an interdisciplinary arts experience into therapy, community, and education in a new way (Estrella 2005).

Many of these early artist-therapists were drawn to work in mental health in part out of a desire to be an agent of social change in their communities. The power of the arts to be a model for change was captured in *Poiesis: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul* when Stephen K. Levine wrote, "Expression is itself transformation, this is the message art brings" (1992, p.15). These practitioners saw their work as countercultural in that traditional mental health, community, and education settings, like society, had marginalized the arts and transformation. By making the arts a central feature of their relationships with those they sought to help, these artist-therapists asserted the radical notion that creativity is a human birthright and that the creative process is inherently linked with the movement towards growth, health, and life (Rogers 1993).

Artists, consultant/educators, and therapists

Unlike many of the other creative arts therapy disciplines (e.g. art therapy, music therapy, or dance therapy), expressive therapy has from its inception recognized the importance of arts for change and for community building both within the context and outside the context of psychotherapy. In 1994 a group of artist-therapists formed a new organization committed to democratic principles and the development of professional standards for expressive arts therapists. This organization, the International Expressive Arts Therapy Association (IEATA), also recognized the need to extend beyond the scope of psychotherapy to embrace the work of expressive arts-oriented artists and expressive arts consultant/educators. Even within early theoretical articulations of the practice of expressive arts therapy, the work of social action was prominent (Rogers 1993).

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This willingness to embrace the affiliated uses of the expressive arts in studio, education, and community emerged in stark contrast to other creative arts therapy disciplines. These other disciplines have struggled over the years with ambivalence towards more arts-based approaches or less clinical approaches, and have often taken strong stances to distinguish themselves professionally by contrasting these other approaches with their more psychotherapeutic approaches. Within music therapy this was exemplified by its rejection of "music healers" or "sound healers" from its circle (Summer 1996). In addition, there has been a large debate within the field about the boundaries of music therapy and community-based music, and attempts to incorporate both approaches under the title of community music therapy (Ansdell 2002). Within art therapy this ambivalence was exemplified by an editorial in the journal of the American Art Therapy Association entitled "When the edges bleed…" (Wadeson 1996). In this article Wadeson examined the boundaries of the field by questioning the difference between "therapy and therapeutic," and argued that if art therapy is to maintain its professional integrity, art therapists must be in the business of providing "therapy." Similarly, within dance therapy, this move towards an identity based in psychotherapy saw its manifestation in a decision by their professional organization in 1998 to pursue affiliation with the National Board of Certified Counselors. This liaison allowed the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) to lobby directly for dance/movement therapy to be considered a defined specialty of counseling, and for members of ADTA to pursue licensure as National Certified Counselors (Cruz 2008).

Legitimacy through mental health counseling licensure

This trend towards affiliation with counseling as a road to occupational legitimacy has seen its zenith in the collaboration of many formal US educational training programs in the creative arts therapies with mental health counseling. Moreover, there has been a move towards reassessing credentials within creative arts therapy professions to align with those of state licensing boards in mental health counseling (Kapitan 2004). As with many of the other disciplines of creative arts therapies, expressive arts therapy has found a certain amount of professional legitimacy by partnering with mental health counseling and marriage and family therapy licensure as well. However, this shift towards licensure and the search for legitimacy has also left the field of expressive arts therapy with potential rifts that could be seen by some as fundamental.

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While expressive therapy has become increasingly affiliated with traditional licensure in mental health counseling, IEATA has stayed committed to the principles of extending the practice of expressive arts to communities and education. This has resulted in an attempt to legitimize and articulate the practice of expressive arts consultation and education (see IEATA 2010a). According to IEATA, these expressive arts practitioners employ an interdisciplinary arts approach to "conflict resolution, organizational development, education, personal or professional growth, the healing arts, spiritual enrichment, and more. While this work may be of therapeutic value, it is not psychotherapy nor does this registration give recipients authority to conduct psychotherapy" (IEATA 2010b).

Critiques of traditional mental health

While some expressive arts practitioners are comfortable with expressive arts partnership with counseling and psychotherapy, others have questioned not only the practical limitations that working within these disciplines and structures have brought (e.g. are there communities and educational programs where therapy is less central to the work that expressive artists might do? or is there a place for the expressive arts within communities that reject "therapy"?) but also the theoretical limitations. Many expressive arts practitioners express concern that professionalization and affiliation with mental health professions in particular leave us at risk of becoming "handmaidens of the status quo" (Sue and Sue 1999, p.32). In this regard many of them echo the sentiment of Foucault as articulated by Rossiter:

> *The human services professions created and were created by a kind of mobilized consent, which gave rise to systems that classify and categorize people. [Foucault] described these as systems of exclusion, which work to establish as normal and natural what has, in fact, been constructed through complex power relations…accounts of "what should be" are always effects of power; thus knowledge in human service professions is not innocent, but an outcome of power – an insight that obliges us to become intentional about how our work is constructed within power. (Rossiter 2000, pp.150–151)*

In addition, the ethnocentric roots of psychology and counseling have increasingly come under scrutiny and question, as have the very conceptualizations of self, development, personality, normality, pathology, and treatment promoted by these fields (Nelson and Prilleltensky 2005;

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Prilleltentsky and Nelson 2002). In light of the rise of various movements within psychology (community psychology, critical psychology, ecopsychology, feminist psychology, global psychology, liberation psychology, radical psychology, peace psychology, political psychology) it is evident that psychology and counseling are beginning to consider the role of power, context, community, multicultural factors, and global issues of domination, self-determination, injustice, and politics. But for many expressive arts practitioners this critique of the ethnocentric roots of psychology and counseling is not happening fast enough.

Expressive arts in therapy, community, and education: A continuum of services

While critiques of traditional conceptualizations within psychology have led to a greater focus on contextual forces within mental health counseling and the centrality of growth and development reinforced by strength-based intervention models (Eriksen and Kress 2006), expressive therapy for the most part continues to exist on the fringes of traditional counseling. Largely, there continues to be a lack of acceptance within traditional counseling towards arts-based approaches to mental health practice. In the United States this tension between traditional mainstream approaches to counseling and psychotherapy and the use of the arts in therapy has often attracted a group of practitioners not afraid to move outside of the status quo. These expressive arts practitioners have worked within a large continuum of services, from prevention and community development to medical-model based psychiatric hospitals.

Expressive therapy has been practiced within traditional mental health facilities, in community development organizations, in the context of healthcare, in schools, and in non-traditional settings – at times under the title of "therapy" and at other times under the title of "art." Expressive arts practitioners have partnered with communities, agencies, and institutions in ways that were models for activist and advocacy projects that promote social change today. At other times these practitioners worked within more conventional systems to promote social change from within – within themselves, within their clients, and within the system. But either way, the work of social change via the expressive arts is not new in practice, only perhaps in emphasis.

Expressive therapists have taken a critical perspective on traditional models of psychotherapy and clinical practice – a perspective that questions core concepts and that examines central ideas. For example,

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expressive therapists have long questioned the "authority" of the therapist. Expressive therapists have embraced the notion that the role of "expert" should not be exclusively claimed by the therapist or even by the clients or community, but that the role of "expert" should be shared through the very experience of creating and the very images that arise in the work (McNiff 1993). Expressive therapies have followed these dictates: Follow the image. Follow the client and the community. Meet the client and community where they are, and facilitate an environment in which arts-based inquiry and connection can take place, trusting that the process will take you to a place where suffering can be experienced, where feeling can be given form, and where the whole self (personal and collective, body, mind, spirit, and imagination) can be enlisted in the service of healing.

SOCIAL ACTION AND EXPRESSIVE THERAPY: WORKING INSIDE THE SYSTEM AND OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

Social change processes can begin at the level of the individual, family, community, or society. Individual efforts to become more culturally competent and tolerant, more socially and politically aware and active, taking more personal responsibility for one's own behavior, or developing an inner contemplative/spiritual practice, are all potential forms of social action. Working within traditional systems, expressive artists may deliver direct care within an agency committed to advocacy and service that directly addresses social problems; they may work directly with clients/consumers to advocate for greater change within the community, or they may work within a team committed to social policy change and greater political inclusion of all constituents. Working outside of traditional systems, expressive arts therapists and community practitioners may work directly as community activists and organizers via the arts. In this way expressive artists have always embodied the notion that "clinical work that is cognizant of the social implications *is* social action, and being politically active *is* doing therapy; these activities are understood to be interrelated processes" (Hocoy 2007, p.29).

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Expressive arts in therapy and community work have always recognized social action

Within expressive therapy, social and political considerations have long been a focus. From its beginnings, expressive therapy has recognized the importance of self-in-context, the power of the individual in community, and the strength of the power of the image to give voice to cultural, universal, transpersonal, and personal meanings. It is the power of the image to mediate between the individual and the collective, to hold multiple meanings, and to bring into consciousness that which is unconscious, that has led Hocoy to propose that "images can concurrently heal personal-collective wounds while demanding a response to injustice" (2007, p.22).

Expressive therapy's willingness to embrace other forms of expressive arts-based practice stemmed in part from its international affiliations, partly from the lateness with which it came to credentialing, and partly out of desire to embrace a less hierarchical model that de-emphasized legitimacy through formal education. Since early on, expressive therapists have trained not only in institutions of higher education, but also within institutes and centers. The International Network of Expressive Arts Therapy Training Centres began in the 1980s as a network of training programs and institutes in Europe, Israel and North America. Programs such as the Tamalpa Institute (which has been training people since 1978) and the Person Centered Expressive Therapy Institute (PCETI) also trained expressive artists both in the United States and internationally.

The international use of the expressive arts for transformation amongst practitioners and educators reinforced a reliance on arts-based and aesthetic theoretical foundations, and less on Western models of psychotherapy as a foundation for practice. For many practitioners this has allowed for an easier transition to social justice agendas and has made their arts-focused work within communities more culturally consonant.

What should we call the arts' capacity to facilitate change?

Expressive therapy as a discipline is just now arriving at the place where it can look at itself retrospectively and begin to examine not only some of its roots but also some of its tensions. Unlike the related disciplines of art therapy, dance therapy, or music therapy, there is still relatively little formal scholarship, research, and literature that can help unify or establish a common language or discourse within the field of expressive arts. In essence, we are a profession of doers. The field has thrived for

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over 35 years in part because of its practical and enduring focus – namely, the facilitation of a relational context in which the inherently healing potential of the imagination and the creative process can be expressed, experienced, and exploited via the arts.

We work via the arts to facilitate change. In so doing we also work to restore a fundamental capacity for imagination and play – surely something that is essential to bring into traditional mental health services. Levine writes, "…healing must be understood as the restoration of a person's imaginative capacity" (1992, p.41). We recognize that there is much in the world in need of repair, and that healing and constructive change are not tasks to be relegated to a group of specialized professionals. Rather, the work of personal, social, and restorative justice is a human imperative.

SOCIAL ACTION AND EXPRESSIVE THERAPY: WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Expressive arts' capacity to strengthen and support individual, family, and community resilience in the face of personal, societal, and global forces of oppression and injustice continues to be at the heart of expressive arts-based therapy and practice. It is the arts' capacity to give voice to suffering and to act on the hearts, minds, and souls of those who enter the sacred space of the imaginal realm that gives expressive arts practitioners hope and direction in their practice. While many expressive arts therapists work individually or with groups within traditional mental health settings, their training is not based solely on psychotherapeutic concepts but on arts-based principles. This frees expressive arts therapists to embrace a wide range of possibilities for practice. While some creative arts therapies have bristled at redefining their work to include community-based practices (Ansdell 2002), expressive therapy has from its beginnings defined itself not only as a practice of "therapy" but as a practice of social change via the arts.

I would encourage traditional educational settings that train expressive arts therapists and practitioners to include coursework and opportunities for students to learn about and engage in social activism. Curriculum should include the exploration of social action methods. I define social action quite broadly to include contemplative practice; consciousness-raising with both individuals and communities (e.g. raising public awareness); reconciliatory work; empowerment training; community organizing and development including group and team

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work (leadership and administration), program and organizational development, and social service delivery; partnerships including corporate and community partnerships, with their concomitant coalition-building potential; institutional change through small groups, through policy, through funding, and through coalition work; social inquiry and social research and evaluation through social critique and action research; political action through lobbying and government liaison work; policy analysis, advocacy, and change; and resource and fund development and evaluation via philanthropy, grant writing, and fundraising. These forms of activism and advocacy should be explored both within mental health contexts and within the arts.

Students should examine a range of social issues related to mental health counseling which are community-based rather than individual, group, or family-based, and explore ways the arts can be implemented as social action. This will allow students to gain an ability to recognize complex social issues and their roots in social policy, the environment, and the economy. These issues include such broad topics as environmentalism, including environmental initiatives and sustainability; globalization, including international cooperation, anti-colonialism, and global economics; health care; equal access to education; economic development; conflict resolution; engaged citizenry and participatory democracy; violence, including war, nuclear proliferation, domestic violence, and peace and justice work; stigma and prejudice, including advocacy and action related to issues such as racism, sexism, ableism, classism, heterosexism, etc.; human rights; and hunger and homelessness.

A course in expressive arts and social action should allow students to acquire an awareness of social action and its interface with expressive arts therapies. Students should be encouraged to learn more about community-based partnerships with local social action projects which utilize the arts, and to find the connection between these projects and mental health counseling and expressive therapies. One potential assignment for students could be to have them identify and interview an arts-based social activist in their community. The course should equip students with strategies, tactics, and methods used to advance social justice via the arts and to enhance social consciousness within the expressive therapies.

A final project could be to develop a proposal for an arts-based social action project. This could include developing a rationale; objectives which describe the arts-based social action intervention, and overall goals; resources needed for the project, including a budget; advertising or publicity that could be used to promote the project; and a summary

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with an accompanying bibliography. This assignment would allow students to develop their specific interests, gain confidence and mastery over some tasks that would allow the projects to get off the ground, and could allow for a range of projects that include the many varied forms of social action, and the many forms of the arts for change.

THE CHALLENGE AND THE CALL

Pluralism, improvisation, and experimentation have all been central to the practice of expressive arts therapy. As a result, perhaps expressive therapy's largest challenge to date has been the increasing tension with regards to legitimacy and professionalization. As Levine and Levine point out, expressive arts therapy's "interdisciplinary nature requires an ability to bring together disparate perspectives and practices without privileging any one of them" (1999, p.11). In the almost 20 years since Stephen Levine (1992) published *Poiesis: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul*, expressive therapy has thrived. While it has grown in practice and scope, it has yet to realize one cohesive approach. Expressive arts therapy in the US is still seeking equal status with other creative arts therapies by seeking membership in the National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapy Associations (NCATA). At the same time, the field is establishing a credentialing process for those members who seek to practice outside of therapy as consultant/educators. In addition, educational programs have recently been developed to focus on expressive arts and social change without the constraints of grounding in a psychotherapeutic approach.

Can the field of "expressive arts" continue to thrive without the coherence of a scope of practice? Is it enough to be grounded in the power of the imagination to give voice and coherence to self and community? Recent invitations to engage in dialogue around these issues (Levine and Antze 2008) represent a beginning answer to those questions; clearly more dialogue and investigation is needed. Those who practice the expressive arts in community and therapy need to step up and give voice to their experience. We need to tell others what we do in theory and in practice. We need to describe what is effective and what is necessary. We need to join together personally, professionally and theoretically – the expressive arts' capacity to facilitate change is a practice the world needs. We must lead the way by sharing what we know, what we do, and what we have borne witness to in our practice.

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4

Communal Art-making and Conflict Transformation

Paolo J. Knill

PREAMBLE: THE MAGIC UNDERWORLD AS A COMMUNAL CREATIVE PLAY

They lived on Swiss territory on the German side of the Rhine during World War II. The neighborhood was a mixture of German NSPD members working on the German "Reichsbahn" (Hitler's Railway) under the Swastika, and Swiss citizens partially organized underground, preparing for a possible guerilla activity in an occupation by Nazi Germany. The Swiss Army had given up on this undefendable small territory. The tension and anxiety were high, and neither side dared to act out the conflict, fearing a later retribution. The kids we will focus on were between 7 and 13 years old. As the oldest of them, I remember that the relationships between those kids under the swastika were ominous. Restrictions had not been explained to us, and when we had some fun together, it was "talked away" by parents. The confusion reached its peak when the bombardments by the Allied forces started. The humming silver flocks of bombers crossed the blue sky, suddenly planting "Silver Christmas Trees" in the blue, and each time shortly after the earth shook like an earthquake. We rejoiced and they panicked, until they hit us for the first time, still with almost no damage. From that moment on, strong air-raid alarm rules were put in effect, and more and more time was spent in the improvised air-raid shelters, which every household had to build. In the public shelter, the kids were all huddling together wondering if we had been hit when the earth shook – or else just bored by the long waiting times and wondering how we could change this. A few of us, mainly under the leadership of my brother and myself, explored the fantasy of an underground world as a play space. Regardless of the political alliances of our parents, we started to construct furniture together, painting the walls and carpeting the ugly

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cellar floor of our private air-raid shelters. We assisted each other in building toys and selecting puppets or vehicles to go permanently into this underworld. After the first of the three devastating bombardments of our city and neighborhood, we had to spend more time in our "underworld" than above. When the alarm howled, we tried to arrange it so that we reached a shelter where we could all play out our stories. We had long-running stories with puppet protagonists, featuring ourselves in well-defined roles. Interestingly enough, the mothers did not interfere: they seemed to be relieved that the kids were taken care of, while they had to cope with gardening and civil service, maintaining the infrastructure of the city without husbands, who by that time were all in the army. By 1944 our "Magic Underworld" was so fascinating that we spent more time playing together there than outside; most of our toys, pastels, and papers joined us there. The kids of the two sides never enacted the political rift, even though we knew about the fate of the Reich and awaited the GIs with eagerness. Our great personal experience was our play in the magic underworld, and our sadness when it was over. My brother and I ended up having a good friendship with the German kids, and we went on using the password we invented to begin the play for many years more.

COMMUNAL ART-MAKING OR COMMUNITY ART

The term "community art" is a strange construct, considering that art cannot be thought of without communities. The word, coined by therapists and educators connected to the arts and creativity, stresses the "community" setting as something special and different from the usual one with individuals and groups. In the beginning, community art was done more or less in the tradition of "warm up exercises," to tune in or engage the audience. This happens with "scores" that are similar to folkloristic dancing, singing, or ethno-drumming, free dance, and voice improvisation. This style of community art is still used for communities that are put together for a short period of time, like audiences or transient communities in gatherings such as conferences, educational settings, festivals, reunions, and cruises.

I want to focus in this chapter on "community art" that is commissioned for conflict transformation or rehabilitation after catastrophic events, and therefore is shaped according to certain criteria. This kind of community art has as its objective to strengthen the resilience of the community to establish and regain well-being. Resilience is understood as the ability to activate resources and mobilize coherence (Schiffer 2001, p.11).

Although every act of art-making or creative play sets up an imaginary space which is distinct from the reality with its conflicts, restrictions, and

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inevitabilities, art-making and play is, so to speak, still part of the same world. Therefore we distinguish the difference by calling it an "alternative experience of worlding." Although this experience also has constraints posed by the artistic frame, the inevitable restrictions of material and the structures of the art discipline, these challenges can be overcome and act like openings to create a greater *range of play* beyond restrictions, even "beyond imagination" (Knill, Levine and Levine 2005, pp.81–88).

In the imaginary space of communal art-making, things are often surprising, unpredictable, and unexpected; yet after they are completed they are accessible in their genuine logic. Things happen differently than in the disturbing reality. For instance, people communicate with those with whom normally they may have little contact or shy away from.

A participant might play a leading role by contributing a new turn in a dance, while this person may be from a group with little influence in the community. People will get opportunities to act, move, and speak that they have not experienced with each other before. This difference expands the "range of play" of the dire straits situation, which in difficult times is experienced with distress.

There is usually something convincing and logical about the completion of a communal work of art, play, or ritual. Therefore reflections about alternative experiences of worlding through art do not offend the necessary logical and argumentative reasoning about experiences within the community.

To guide a community into an alternative experience of worlding and later back into the reality of a difficult life must be part of the score of community art. A characteristic of all the "ins and outs" of the alternative experience are aspects of "decentering" ("intermodal decentering") and "range of play" (Knill *et al.* 2005, pp.88–91).

By "decentering" we name the move away from the restricted experience posed by conflict and crisis, which had resulted in rigid reasoning and stressful, often destructive acting, marking the pressure around the "dead end" situations in a conflict. Decentering is a move into the opening of the surprising-unpredictable-unexpected, provided by the artistic experience within the logic of imagination. A centering follows the decentering, guided by the facilitator, who relates the two in an effort to find ease. It is helpful to validate first the artistic work resulting from the decentering phase, and the achievement of that work, before experiences are compared and/or consequences discussed.

By providing a "range of play," we contrast the situational restrictions experienced. The phenomenon of *play* is the "doing as if," the "open-

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endedness" in the timeless circularity in the here and now, that results in a freeing up from the pressure to achieve immediate solution under impossible circumstances.

> Melinda Meyer, who worked with Bosnian refugees and also conducted a longitudinal study over 13 years, reports how in early interventions the decentering into playful bodily experiences brought a basic relief – whether through communal imitation of culturally specific movement patterns, like the dance-like picking of apples, of other theatrical play like imitating animals or making faces. This freeing-up led to further steps to regain the physical shaping capacity necessary for the repatriation process, including documentary filmmaking and testimony. (Meyer 2007; *passim*)

COMMUNITY ART: A DECENTERING METHOD PROVIDING A RANGE OF PLAY

The complexity of the imaginary space in community art presents itself as concrete and "thingly." During the shaping process material interventions are concrete and very explicitly placed "on the surface." These interventions can serve the purpose of grounding, bringing participants closer to the here and now of the alternative experience of worlding. We may suggest to "dancers" to use more space and listen to the music, or ask the "musicians" to add their voices to the instruments.

The "in and out" to and from the decentering experience and the reality posed by it is discernible through the here and now of the artistic work, its initiation, its process of becoming, and its completion as a "thing." In its graspable presence it offers many options in helping to distinguish between the different realities. The distinction of stage, studio space, audience space, and the habitual experience of worlding is concrete and explicitly based in the body and the senses.

The idea of widening the range of play by engaging the imagination is a common concept in the practice of conflict resolution. Conflicts are seen in these practices as situations that lack choices, giving participants a sense of being locked into the matter of conflict. Community art gives a community an opportunity to leave the zone of conflict, with an opening to options for new actions and thoughts.

Systems theory argues that an intervention simultaneously perturbs the structure of interaction and widens the range of play. Even though this challenge may evoke some uncertainty, it is necessary to create a surprising autopoetic process of transformation. When we use the arts

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as a mode of interaction, the impetus for discovery balances the fear of uncertainty if we provide an adequate motivating space. Communal art-making can be seen as a discipline of play, where the probing of the participants is a kind of perturbation; self-organization happens within the range of play defined by the restrictions of the discipline and the frame (material, space, time, and means). The community art leader is a player in the system, who plays a game that is different from the troublesome situation of the community.

The limits that define the frame of an art discipline or play vary with respect to space, time, material, and method of shaping. They belong to traditions of art-making in every culture. Therefore, interventions with respect to limits and frame can be easily accepted and understood if they are sensitive to those traditions. These interventions made before or during the process of play may possibly restrict the range of play, but usually they do not restrict the act of playing and its content. On the contrary, they make the playing less threatening. Furthermore, those interventions help to distinguish between the realities of the habitual and the alternative worlding, as this develops during the decentering.

The accomplishment of art-making is literally enabling, and it has the merit of beauty, eliciting the "Aha!" of an aesthetic response. Communal art-making is thus also a learning experience, providing the individual opportunities for sociability, enabling, and situational coping. The effect of this experience is cognitive and physical. We can observe it in the change of behavior, emotion, mood, and tone of the participants. This coping process can also be seen as training, or as "exercise," to help cope with the situational restrictions and individual frustrations in the training of professionals doing relief work. Within a cognitive frame of reference, the coping experience in the communal learning process of community art means confronting entrenched beliefs: "We are not able to accomplish anything," "We have too few resources," etc. But a community art process goes beyond the level of solely cognitive argumentation:

- It is a rich exercise with repeated experiences of accomplishment.

  In a typical work-oriented practice of community art, a blues improvisation with a chorus is undertaken. With each repetition under a competent leader, participants get more and more excited, and get into the groove of it. It is a true repeated experience of accomplishment.

- It is a psychophysical concrete experience that allows emotional and cognitive reasoning.

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All artistic experiences are concrete, and close to the psyche in their emotional resonance. In the above example, the blues will eventually have an improvised text that links to this experience. Under expert leadership, the discourse between repetitions is cognitive, even though it is focused on the communal art-making.

- In addition, the communal artwork can *touch* or *move*. All the senses are engaged and therefore it *makes sense* in its beauty.

  Therefore the resulting work, e.g. the blues mentioned above, does not solely make sense in terms of the cognitive learning. It also makes sense in its beauty. It can be remembered as a touching, moving, regenerating, and nourishing experience – a kind of "soul food."

- It is also an experiential field of discovery that motivates curiosity. Discovery of this kind is one of the fundamental sensorimotor and cognitive learning experiences.

  The method of community art, in its improvisational characteristics, is built on a leadership that engages curiosity and motivates discovery. The discovery of the blues riff, the words that work, and the rhythm that makes the community get into a dance, has many fundamental sensorimotor steps that will be reflected later in cognitive learning.

In the traditional understanding of coping, exercise has a fundamental position. The practice of repetition in community art is additionally guided by an attentive, supportive attitude toward a sensory acuity and openness to an aesthetic response. This openness gives what is hidden a chance to be met and to be utilized as resource. With these options come new perspectives, fantasies, ideas, and imaginations for alternative ways to act or respond (Knill 2000, pp.9–14).

COMMUNAL ART-MAKING AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CULTURE OF COMMUNITIES

When we look how Western task-oriented communities try to release some of their individual and social stress, we can usually find two offerings designed for that purpose:

1. entertaining that is somehow distracting, or "airing out" events
2. opportunities for counseling and reflection.

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In the following section I will sketch the specific needs addressed in these two activities. Later I will elucidate the understanding of community art as a necessary part of culture, bridging these two isolated attempts at coping in everyday communal work. Community art then can be understood as a cultural necessity that fosters innovative thought and action by mobilizing resources and activating imagination across cultures.

Entertaining events

Task-oriented communities like companies and institutions have traditionally used entertaining events to ease the habitual hierarchy and protocol, and sometimes also to blur the boundary between workplace and private life. Such events range from bowling and soccer games to extended parties (New Year's, etc.) and company trips. These events are based in game-like social traditions. Therefore they offer the expectation of fun and distraction. They do not, however, provide an opening to an imaginative space that has a potential for new alternative experiences. The positive effect of such events in the life of a community should not be underestimated. What has proven to be lacking over and over again in these events is an opportunity for members of the community to reflect on their participation in their shared situation. To facilitate such reflection, in the second half of the last century companies and institutions hired consultants who had been trained in one of the group encounter or counseling techniques that became popular at that time. With their focus on "uncovering the pathological," they had little success in structural situations evoking crisis or conflict that needed more resourceful solution-focused methods.

Opportunities for reflection

In the beginning, confrontational models that had been developed for therapeutic or encounter group settings, such as group dynamics, gestalt therapy, and related styles, focused on conflicts and their root in the individual, personal biography. These confrontational models worked for groups oriented towards therapy, but they lowered the performance of the group in other tasks. Later, systems-oriented, person-centered, theme-centered, and similar approaches have been favored because of their focus on the social, cultural, and organizational aspect of coping in groups (Nellessen 1997, pp.66–72).

Toward the end of the last century the systems-oriented approach prevailed, often modified with a resource and solution-focused method. These approaches support the activation of resources as well as aspects of

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resilience. Therefore, they strengthened the system's coping mechanisms necessary to fulfill its mission.

When we consider the size of communities it becomes evident that these methods of reflection are limited to well-organized small clusters, groups or teams within relatively stable communities. In addition, the exclusive focus on words makes the process lengthy and cumbersome, especially with foreign languages, having the taste of "more of the same" and creating more misunderstanding then there already is. This is especially true for large, not very well-organized communities in conflict. We need to recognize, however, that the format of the resource and solution-focused method of reflection in the tradition of systems theory can have great merits when we reflect on community art projects. This has to be considered when we organize feedback in smaller groups and report back to the full community.

COMMUNITY ART AS A BRIDGE

The need for a bridge

It was soon recognized in work with communities that entertainment and distraction with opportunities for reflection, isolated from each other, are not very helpful in the attempt to create innovative solutions and resourceful behavior. Tension in the difficult situation increases: the fun of the event is over, and often issues become more severe in the tense atmosphere outside of the event, which does not provide space to work for a transformation of the conflict.

Attempts at bridging

In an attempt to connect an experiential event with a reflective opportunity, it became fashionable in the business world to offer "new games," "outward-bound," extreme sports, and similar activities combined with counseling, reflection, and coaching. Soon, however, the limits of these activities became evident. Although these attempts truly presented an alternative challenge, the outcome was never much of a surprise, and they were often out of cultural context. The game-like characteristics are often close to the problematic conflicting positions at hand. Even though games are different from everyday activity they have a predictable strategy for solutions. However, the complex characteristics of difficult situations around conflicts call for innovative strategies, rather than having to "win a game, without having a chance to invent it."

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The bridge: Community art

In contrast to games, each individual art project undertaken by a community needs an appropriate spatial and temporal frame, selected materials, and envisioned directions of shaping. The act of creative forming in the arts includes innovative strategies and techniques of shaping, pursuing developments of the emerging, often surprising unforeseen product, and therefore necessitating a constant revision of the planned outcome. Each process becomes an innovative attempt to find the optimal response to a complex dynamic between resources, objectives, actions taken, and emerging patterns within a defined frame. This creates a feedback loop with shaping strategies, changing the structure of the material and the environment. All of this occurs in the frame of the discipline of artistic play, which includes the community as an audience, which witnesses and evaluates with feedback how the resulting artistic product works as a whole. The artistic product can be evaluated in various ways:

- It can be considered as "being on the way."
- It can be followed in its particular way.
- It is unique in its character and has a recognizable style.
- It contains surprises that belong to the sense-making logic of the work.

When we consider communal art-making in the context of decentering as explained above, we can recognize the parallels with the experience of a community. The complexity communities are confronted with in difficult times calls for innovative solutions that consider the dynamic interdependence of frame, material, structure, strategies, visions, emerging patterns, environmental patterns, and so on. The problems are unique in their characteristics and the way to solve them needs to be congruent to this uniqueness, although styles may be similar.

It is therefore conducive to use the artistic process rather than games as a decentering method, because it offers a complexity that games do not offer, unless we reinvent them each time and leave the envisioned emerging goals up to the process of completion. However, we would then need criteria for evaluation that most likely would also have aesthetic connotations, which would in essence be a kind of artistic process.

Community art therefore bridges the uniqueness of the complex reality of a community in its challenges to find transforming solutions connected to its conflicts, by way of the uniqueness of an artistic "time out" experience. Community art also offers some relief in the playful

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attitude of innovative explorations, which may be close to the pleasure of "entertaining events."

Like brainstorming, community art with its decentering characteristics circumvents the deadlock created by "more of the same" thinking, which is focused on the troublesome issues and patterned around "more of the same dead-end" strategies and approaches. The pedagogy of community art follows the potential for surprise in the intermodal decentering, bringing a range of play that steps out of the ordinary grammar and logic of conversational language. However, artistic shaping is also a kind of "language," a language that needs new words and ends in new conversations.

PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ART

When we want to motivate a community to engage in artistic activities, we have to consider the ever-present respect–fear continuum in people faced with an art project. One way to confront it is by awakening the curiosity for an open understanding of art as it may be found in the culture at hand.

It is helpful to research folk and contemporary art in the culture of the community and identify people engaged in folk and/or professional art, using them as helpers in preparing scores that have an improvisational character and offer flexible possibilities of participation. Such research should in addition address questions like:

- What experiences or traditions of gatherings, events, and communal art already exist in this community?
- What is the organizational structure of the community, and what are existing formal and informal leadership patterns, especially with respect to communal events and artistic activities?
- How can I utilize these resources, within the contract I am bound to, using a process that includes community art?
- Concretely, what resources are available?
    - space and possibilities of usage
    - art materials, musical instruments, theater props, etc.
    - movable structures and technology (furniture, stage elements, lights, PA, etc.)
    - access to nature and its resources.

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- Who are the people who have some experience, for instance as drummers, singers, storytellers, poets, dancers, actors, etc.?
  - Whom could I use in a pilot group to prepare and use later as assistants?
  - Should I bring or recruit somebody as co-leader?
  - What are the roles of co-leaders or assistants in the community art process?
  - In the preparation, we aim for an open score that includes enough space for improvisation. However, the time-frame has to be set clearly.
  - We also have to make sure that there is enough time to tune in, especially when we introduce community art for the first time.

The following principles are based on the assumption that the preparatory research was done carefully.

The two pillars of attention

The attention is given fully to the process-oriented learning, as it is understood in systems theory as self-organizational learning. The language used during the decentering community art, however, is purely in the tradition of the studio, the stage, or the atelier. This practice includes how we address the people and their activities, and also how we give feedback. We talk to the "company," "ensemble," "orchestra," or "choir," and address a "painter," an "actor," a "drummer," etc.

We guide or give feedback solely to the "surface" of the "artwork" or "process" in the way it presents itself as a sensory experience, and we abstain from superficial generalization or categories of meaning. The reflection in the artistic feedback focuses on the form and structure, the material, properties, techniques of shaping, etc. Individual psychological interpretation belongs to the personal private sphere, and space will be made for it in the so-called "harvest," the last part of the session, when everybody is free to share with whomever they need to.

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The first pillar: "The here and now"

- *Where are we in "our arrival"?* We intend to anchor the community in our present time. We look to the calendar and consider the time of the day:
  - season, special holidays, day of the week, birthday, special events, etc.
  - morning, evening, midnight, beginning, ending, half-time, arrival, etc.

  We intend also to bring into the awareness the time-space continuum of the culture we are in:
  - customs, rituals, history, birthdays, anniversaries of the community or groups, the news, etc.
- *Where are we going to?* We look for possibilities to include this aspect of the envisioned goal, or what is approaching us:
  - the theme of the desired outcome of the contract (peace, a culture of tolerance, a conference topic, a cooperative identity, etc.)
  - the coming winter or spring, the coming graduation, the coming challenge, etc.

The second pillar: The "I" and the "we"

- *How will I structure space and time to prepare the individual participant for a communal working and shaping together?* The "tuning-in" and the "warm up" should focus on the physical and psychological preparation of the individual:
  - The awakening of the senses, especially those that will be the primary focus in the planned community art. An effective way of doing this is by guiding the attention toward what is concrete and physically present and what will later become part of the artistic process. It includes the space, the things at hand, the tools, the material, and the physical presence of the other members of the community. After this sensory awakening we need to guide the awareness of the possibilities of shaping planned for the actual community art score.

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